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# IRELAND UNFREED

POEMS OF 1921

BY

SIR WILLIAM WATSON



# IRELAND UNFREED



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POEMS AND VERSES WRITTEN IN  
THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1921 BY  
SIR WILLIAM WATSON



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## Dedication

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To you, my little daughters, happy in being  
The daughters also of an Irish mother,  
And happiest when no other  
Than the sweet Irish air  
Is on your cheeks; to you that blithely share  
The gleesome hours, and catch their bliss a-fleeing,  
I, with grave pen. inscribe this little book;  
Desiring—nay, foreseeing—  
That you shall live to look  
On Ireland's Freeing.

W. W.

THE larger part of the contents of these pages has not been printed before, but several of the sonnets and other poems and verses forming the lesser part have been published in the London *Daily News*, and one or two in the London *Times* and the *Daily Mail*. To the editors of these newspapers the author tenders his thanks for liberty to reclaim his contributions, some of which now reappear with altered titles, and three with material revision.

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# IRELAND UNFREED



## THE BOUND ONE

THOU whom not joys but perils and  
pangs allure:  
The white foam's sister, as the white  
foam pure:  
The dark storm's daughter, guarding  
long and late  
That far-descended heirloom, ancient  
hate:  
I cannot say—"In all things that con-  
cerned  
Thee and thy hopes I never swerved  
or turned,  
Or held with stumbling mind a waver-  
ing creed."

But this at least I can declare indeed:  
Through days with tempest packed,  
    with thunder piled,  
My dream was of an Ireland Recon-  
    ciled  
By utter undoing of wrongs all Earth  
    saw done,  
And by *full freedom* to *fair friend-*  
*ship* won:  
Not mocked and cheated, conquering  
    some vain goal  
That could but foil the hunger of the  
    soul,  
And left as now, with the inmost ills  
    unchanged,  
The Spouse whom wedlock hath the  
    more estranged,

Whom bonds do the more direly rend  
apart;

No—but from long, long sickness of  
the heart

Delivered: healed with a more sovereign  
balm

Than the old deep hurts have known:  
and in blest calm—

An Ireland willing to be loved at  
last—

Risen from the agonies of the love-  
less Past,

Risen from a hundred shatterings, great  
and new.

O that 'twere mine to see that dream  
come true!

## MORE THAN TROPHIES

Ev'n were thy freeing complete,  
The marks thy fetters made  
Could not for ever in a moment fade,  
O Erin, from thy feet!  
Why should they? 'Twere more meet  
That they remained, to be in times  
afar  
Held sacred, when perhaps mere glory-  
ing Power,  
And all its idols of an age or hour,  
Unreverenced are.

## REPRISAL BY FIRE

AND *this*, is *this* the justice that we  
claim

To have kept untarnished in all realms  
we sway—

This revel of vengeance, blotting the  
pure day—

These barbarous deeds, that well might  
make our name

A byword and a hissing and a shame  
Throughout the Earth? This is the  
doom-paved way

By which great Empires in august  
array

March to their thunderous deaths 'mid  
rage and flame.

These are the acts that in an hour  
unblest

Cancel a thousand deeds benignly done,  
Fling far away the good gains Wisdom  
won,

And striking home to Man's most in-  
ward breast

Make Domination seem a maniac jest  
Heard 'mid the flare of a distempered  
sun.

TO THE PRIME MINISTER  
(THE RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE)

WHEN France was flame, and Belgium  
ashes, and while  
O'er us the flying Death continually  
Hung near, you rose to greatness.

You were he  
Who in the teeth of the enemy's might  
and guile  
Did set a-whirring throughout all this  
isle  
The Wheels of the Machine of Victory.  
And when shall we forget it? When  
the Sea

Forgets his thunder, or the Morn her  
smile.

But O sad change! Chiefly, to-day,  
in *this*

Your mastery towers—that you forbear  
to stir

A finger, while your minions fierce and  
fell

Shatter doomed Ireland's homes, and  
build in her

A suburb of the great metropolis  
Of evil and woe, whose name on earth  
is Hell.

TO SIR HAMAR GREENWOOD

No thin, pale fame, no brief and poor  
renown,

Were thy just due. Of thee shall  
wise Time say:

“Chartered for havoc, ’neath his rule,  
were they

Whose chastisement of guilt was to  
burn down

The house of innocence, in fear-crazed  
town

And trembling hamlet. While he had  
his way,

Converts untold did this man make  
each day

20 TO SIR HAMAR GREENWOOD

To savage hate of Law and King  
and Crown."

Great propagandist of the rebel creed!  
Proselytiser without living peer!  
If thou stand fast—if thou but per-  
severe—

'Twill be thy glory to complete indeed  
Valera's work, that doth ev'n now so  
need

Thy mellow art's last touches, large  
and clear!

## WASTED BLANDISHMENTS

YES, we do justice—here and there;  
And patch and peddle and repair;  
And even sometimes wonder still  
Whether our Rule be good or ill;  
And marvel much, when Ireland's Soul  
Defies a Government's control!

We spread before her that vain bait,  
Co-partnership in our proud fate;  
But waywardly and wildly wise,  
She turns thereon undazzled eyes.  
For she accounts of far more worth  
Each foot of that green piece of earth

Yonder amid the Atlantic spray,  
Where 'tis her children's dream to say:  
"This is indeed our Isle—*our own!*  
This is our Land—*and ours alone.*"

TO AMERICA CONCERNING  
IRELAND

FRIEND with frank tongue, who o'er  
the unflattering sea  
Dost likewise flatter not: who view'st  
the maze  
And tangle of things through no vague-  
shimmering haze:  
Pledge thou thy word, that if, long  
urged by thee,  
We loose her bonds and set the  
Thrall'd One free,  
That Morn-fair deed, crowned with  
Man's golden praise,  
Shall not for us, in thy consenting  
gaze,

Prove the bright Mother of dark  
calamity!

Then shall we know that some who  
else might mar

The Dayspring, and drag Midnight  
from its grave—

Some whose imperial dreams are loth  
to die—

Will listen first beside the Western  
Wave:

Will hear thy thundered interdict afar,  
And flee in terror lest they hear it  
nigh.

## COMPLETE DELIVERANCE

“A LEAP in the Dark,” say the champions of Night.

O surely a leap *from* the Dark, into Light!

## A GLORIOUS IMMUNITY

THEE, wounded Ireland, thee I gratuate;  
late;

First, on thy wounds; next, on that  
very fate

Whose malice hath yet spared thee one  
worse woe

Than even thou hast tasted. For  
although

Grievous is thraldom, in a world be-  
thronged

With the proud wrongers and the  
prostrate wronged,

Far deeper is the unconscious misery

Of them that shackle those who would  
be free!

And though the thralled *seem* hapless,  
theirs who thrall  
Is the most dark, lost, heavenless state  
of all.

## TO ERIN ONCE MORE

UPON that Day when thou among  
thy peers  
Shalt take the place that is by right  
thine own,  
Judge not of England with a mind  
too prone  
To harsh, hard thoughts! Though oft  
her palsying fears  
Did freeze up noble purpose, hers  
were tears  
For the world's heartache—hers no  
breast of stone.  
She wronged thee much: but speak  
not blame alone,

When forth thou step'st into the  
happier years.

And when, disburdened of a cumber-  
ing weight,

Thou from the transitory and fugitive—  
From thy dead yesterdays—art loosed,  
to live

At peace with God and Man and  
Time and Fate,

Be thine the greatness of the more  
than great,

Whose glory it is, divinely to forgive.

## AFTER NEWS OF AN EXECUTION

WAS it all folly—vonder, hour by hour,  
To choose, not peace, but strife, and  
thereto dare  
  
The lion couched in his unnative lair,  
The world-feared lion, mighty to  
devour?  
  
O that some folly as splendid were a  
flower  
  
Not, on all shores but those, so won-  
drous rare!  
  
Common as weed in Ireland every-  
where

That splendid folly blooms, and hath  
the power  
To make a mere slight boy not only  
face  
Death with no tremblings, with no  
coward alarms,  
But like a lover woo it to his arms,  
Clasp with a joyous and a rapt  
embrace  
Death's beauty, Death's dear sweet-  
ness, Death's pure grace,  
And count all else as nought beside  
Death's charms.

## TILL IRELAND HAS HER OWN

To all who heed, to all the freed,  
To all the unfreed, 'tis known,  
There'll be no rest for Ireland's breast  
Till Ireland Has Her Own.  
  
Age after age will nurse the rage  
That breeds not rage alone,  
Bringing no rest to Ireland's breast  
Till Ireland Has Her Own!

And tell me, when may *Englishmen*  
Win back the peace that's flown?  
There'll be no rest for *England's* breast  
Till Ireland Has Her Own.

Each day, each hour, unhappier Power,  
On an unsurer throne!

No rest, no rest for *England's* breast  
Till Ireland Has Her Own.

TO THE PRIME MINISTER  
YET AGAIN

(THE Rt. Hon. D. LLOYD GEORGE)

LIKE your renown-clad namesake, who  
did slay,  
Far across Time and its vast charnels  
drear,  
If only with a legendary spear  
A fabled dragon, you in your midday  
Did unto ravening things give battle,  
and they  
Felt your light lance through all their  
scales! They fear  
That lance no more, perceiving but  
too clear

How rusted is its chivalry away.

Plunged is that spear in no foul  
monster's side,

But pointed at the Captive Maiden's  
breast,

Who, greenly robed, sits pining to  
be free.

For not as her Deliverer do you ride  
Forth, but to bid her guards be  
adamant, lest

She escape i' the tempest from cap-  
tivity.

## THE STRANGER-MINSTREL

O FAIR with broom and woodbine,  
And rowan and wild rose,  
Is the Land of Hope Deferred  
Where the shamrock grows;  
And thither did I stray  
In the long-gone day,  
And I gave my heart away  
To sweet Ireland.

Dead Songsters of her household  
Have loved her and adored,  
And their love was like a flame,  
And their song was like a sword;

But an alien bard to-day,  
All world-worn and gray,  
Has sung his heart away  
To sweet Ireland.

## SECRET COMMUNION

PERT Folly said to skyborn Freedom:

“Thou

Hast been so long unknown on Ireland’s  
shore,

Art certain she doth miss thee any  
more?

Nay, if thou should’st return to-morrow,  
how

Will she remember thee, whose face is  
now

One of the vague, dim things of here-  
tofore?

What if she pause, loth to unlatch her  
door

To such a stranger?" Then with a  
lit brow

Did Freedom speak: "Can Erin's soul  
forget

Mine, her companion 'mid the fields  
and streams

Of her far youth? Ah, no! And  
though it seems

Ages untold since she and I have  
met

Ev'n for a day, we meet at midnight  
yet,

For always am I with her in her  
dreams."

TO AN IRISH PATRIOT

YOUR cause at its centre is pure: the  
wise plan  
Is to keep its circumference pure—if  
you can.

## TO AN OPPRESSOR

COME down from thy high seat!  
If with the blood of men  
Its steps be slippery, the more easy,  
then,  
The offsliding of thy feet!  
And back thou never shalt be asked  
to climb  
While this tired World ascends the  
stairs of Time.

## THE TWO PUISSANCES

IRELAND, two Puissances there are, that

claim

Untrammelled sovereign lordship and  
control,

*This* o'er thy body, thy fair outward  
frame,

*That* o'er the innermost places of thy  
soul.

One, by the Thames, of perishing clay  
and lime

Built its chief seat, and of mere  
crumbling stone.

One beside Tiber, gazing beyond  
Time,

Hath its unfrail, unmundane, mystic  
throne.

And great and mighty are both these  
Powers on earth,

O Ireland! But all men that breathe  
can see—

Except the sightless who are blind  
from birth—

Which of the twain doth verily reign  
in thee.

## THE VISION

I LOOKED forth through the Void,  
And a dark Hand did draw  
From the near West a curtain, and  
I saw  
Dull Tyranny, on the breath of Folly  
upbuoyed;  
And a blind surgeon, Statecraft, there  
employed  
To keep the wounds of Ireland ever  
raw;  
And Rapine, masked as Order, his  
vast maw  
With vengeance still uncloyed;  
And round these forms, a dance of  
lawless Law  
O'er Liberty Destroyed.

## ENGLAND'S CHOICE

YONDER where shakes with antic  
laughter

In elfin moonlight the spoilful sea,  
What shall the stars behold hereafter—  
Ireland captive or Ireland free?

Tempest or calm for the Mother who  
bore us,

Age-crowned England—which shall  
it be?

Reproach or acclaim in the morrow  
before us?

Ireland captive or Ireland free?

The quick and the dead have joined  
their voices,

O mighty and proud one, crying to  
thee—

“Choose—while as yet in thy hands  
the choice is:  
Ireland captive or Ireland free.”

# A List of Books by the same Author IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

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